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Supervisor, First District San Bernardino County

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Mitzelfelt Partners with Sheriff, Cities for Gang Crackdown

VICTORVILLE – First District San Bernardino County Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt today joined Sheriff Gary Penrod, along with representatives of other law enforcement agencies and Victor Valley cities to announce the commencement of Operation Desert Heat, an extended enforcement operation aimed at cracking down on gangs in the Victor Valley. The goal of the enforcement action is to combat the increase in gang activity in the desert

"The Sheriff's Department has been doing a commendable job of arresting gang members and sending them to jail, but with this operation, we're turning up the heat on gang members," said Supervisor Mitzelfelt, who allocated \$100,000 to help fund the additional enforcement. "The Victor Valley is our home and we're not going to let gang members take it away from us. Our message to gang members is clear – reform, get out of our County or you will go to jail."

During Operation Desert Heat, \$135,000 is being allocated to saturate the Victor Valley with law enforcement officers, adding dozens of Sheriff's Deputies to the streets. Those deputies will be in addition to existing deputies in local stations and will also be supplemented by officers from other agencies, including the Probation Department, Parole, the Highway Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

"We've seen the unfortunate results in other communities that used to be rural but now have a reputation for gang infestation," added Mitzelfelt. "We cannot allow that to happen in the Victor Valley."

"Although these are difficult financial times for city and county government, we believe this is a necessary step to put an end to the increasing gang related crime in the high desert," said Sheriff Penrod. "We are committed to do whatever is necessary. Law enforcement and the citizens of San Bernardino County will tolerate this no longer."

Referring to the enforcement action as a "troop surge," Mitzelfelt said the operation was aimed at pushing gang members out of the desert.

"Gangs use tools such as fear and intimidation to gain strength in communities. Operation Desert Heat is going to result in gang members finding out what it's like to feel fear and intimidation," said Mitzelfelt. "To prevail in the War on Gangs, we have to be stronger, smarter and tougher. Operation Desert Heat will send a strong message to gang members – gangs will not be tolerated in our community."